

Brooks E. Kleber Memorial Reading in Military History

Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis

Tim Townsend

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As the war in Germany ended, the trials of Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke were just beginning. Gerecke was a small town minister who, at age 50, volunteered his spiritual support to the U.S. Army during World War II. Gerecke's most challenging assignment was to provide religious services to the twenty-one Nazi prisoners awaiting their day of justice in front of a military tribunal for crimes against humanity. The U.S. Army asked Gerecke to pray with and give religious guidance to the disciples of Hitler, even after he had personally seen the horrors of the German concentration camps. Gerecke came away from the ordeal with a new understanding of morality, sin, empathy, and the limits of forgiveness. Mr. Tim Townsend will speak about the tribulations this Midwest preacher faced externally and internally as he struggled to accept and execute his mission. The compelling story of military service, spiritual service, and personal reflection show how Gerecke's experiences tested his faith how he influenced the Nuremberg trials.

Tim Townsend, formerly the religion reporter at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, holds master's degrees from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and Yale Divinity School. He has written for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and *Rolling Stone*, among other publications. In 2005, 2011, and 2013, he was named Religion Reporter of the Year by the Religion Newswriters Association, the highest honor on the "God beat" at American newspapers. He recently joined the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project as a senior writer and editor in Washington, D.C.

DATE: Thursday, May 7, 2015

TIME: Doors open at 6:30 PM and the talk begins at 7:15 PM

PLACE: USAHEC, Visitor and Education Center, Multi-Purpose Room

For updates and any last-minute changes in meeting times and places, please check the USAHEC homepage: www.USAHEC.org or call the Information Desk: (717) 245-3972.